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School Reform News

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School Choice Advocates Win in South Carolina, Utah



South Carolina Gov. Mark Sanford, a strong supporter of parental choice in education, won his re-election bid on November 7. Several other school choice proponents posted victories in South Carolina, and Utah as well.

By Karla Dial

Though conservative voters woke up to a newly "blue" world on November 8, the results of the midterm election could mean two states will soon have more school choice.

In South Carolina, where a sweeping school choice bill that would have provided a mixture of tax credits and

vouchers for low-income and special-needs children failed to pass in the state House of Representatives by only seven votes earlier this year, school choice was such a hot topic it even permeated the race for state treasurer.

"The incumbent treasurer slammed [Republican challenger] Thomas [Ravenel] for supporting school choice because he said it would decimate the treasury," explained Randy Page,

president of South Carolinians for Responsible Government, a conservative lobbying group in Charleston. "He sent an e-mail to teachers across the state saying they need to support him to keep public schools solvent."

Tight Races

Ravenel ousted his opponent, as did five other Republicans in races for

ELECTION p. 4

Activists Battle Mental Health Screening Law

By Fran Eaton

Two years after a new law was passed in Illinois creating the framework for schools to screen students for mental health disorders, the state has saved more than \$44 million in hospital costs, according to a report released in early October.

But some groups say the alleged cost savings do not justify a program under which schools are overstepping their authority. They also say it imposes a mandatory, universal plan to screen all

MENTAL HEALTH p. 5

Special-Needs Scholarship Proposed in Ky.

By Mary Susan Littlepage

Kentucky state Rep. Stan Lee (R-Lexington) proposed a school choice bill for special-needs students this fall. If it passes, it will be the first school choice program of any kind in the state.

Lee's plan would let parents of special-needs children use scholarships to send their kids to other public schools or participating private schools for

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Ohio Justices Tilt to Charter Schools

By Scott Stephens

Ohio's network of publicly funded, privately operated charter schools is constitutional, a sharply split Ohio Supreme Court ruled on October 25.

The 4-3 ruling was a big win for charter school operators and removes the uncertainty that dogged the state's 305 charter schools and the 72,000 students who attend them.

"This decision lifts a cloud that was hanging over the program," said Chad Readler, the lawyer who defended against the suit on behalf of about 100 charter school operators. "This decision allows all schools to return their focus to

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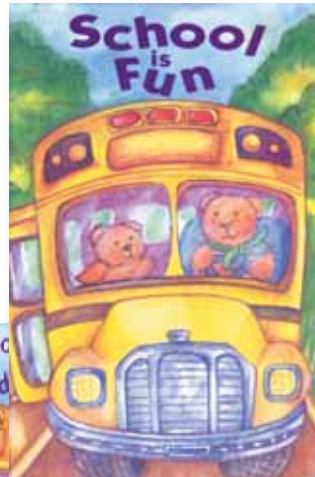
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sity, says, "Students usually find it to be an eye-opener." The Woodbury Junior High School Social Studies Department in Minnesota calls it the "world's *smartest* political quiz."

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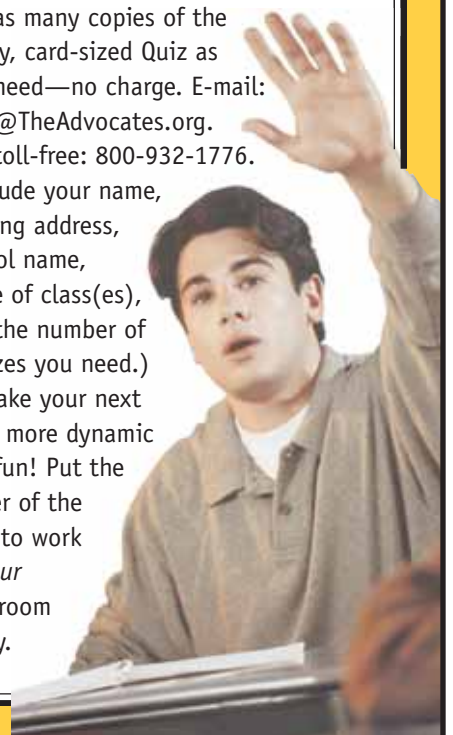
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School Choice Movement Mourns Founder

By Karla Dial

When Milton Friedman died on November 16 at the age of 94, the school choice movement lost its founder.

Friedman, whose work as an economist earned him the Nobel Prize in 1976, believed in small government and letting the market do its work in all areas of the economy. In a 1955 essay, "On the Role of Government in Education," Friedman turned his discerning eye on public education, writing that vouchers that follow the child would improve education by promoting competition between schools.

National Movement

Fifty-one years later, that idea has become a national movement.

"Among the greatest champions of freedom in all of history, Milton Friedman was a giant. His greatest legacy is the tens of thousands of children who now attend high-quality schools because of the idea of school choice that Dr. Friedman pioneered in 1955," said Clint Bolick, president of the Alliance for School Choice.

"He leaves that precious legacy to a new generation of leaders who must nurture and expand it," Bolick continued. "I will personally miss a dear friend, but he will serve eternally for me and countless others as a source of towering inspiration."

George Clowes, a senior fellow at The Heartland Institute and former managing editor of this publication, interviewed Friedman in 1998.

"He was very courteous, although he did correct me when I suggested he was a conservative," Clowes recalled. "Vouchers are needed in K-12 education, he said, to eliminate the competitive disadvantage private schools face in providing an alternative to government schools. The most direct way of doing that, he said, is through a system of vouchers."

"If you're trying to go into the business of selling chocolate and somebody down the street is taking money from you in order to give chocolates away, then you've got a difficult time making a business out of that," he said," noted Clowes.

Intellectual Giant

Though he stood only 5 feet, 3 inches, Friedman was an intellectual giant whom many found intimidating—though sometimes only momentarily.

"The first time I met Milton was at a Friedman Foundation conference in San Francisco back in 1998," recalled Andrew Coulson, director of the Cato Institute's Center for Educational Freedom. "I received a last-minute invitation to share the stage with Milton, [his wife] Rose, and [economist] Thomas Sowell because Milton had

read the unfinished manuscript for [my book] *Market Education: The Unknown History* and wanted me to say a few words about it.

"We hadn't spoken together before going on stage, and just as they were about to switch on our microphones, Milton leaned over and said something like, 'Good book, except for the bad-mouthing of vouchers in Chapter 10.' For a second," Coulson said, "I thought I was about to have my as-yet-unreleased manuscript carved up by a Nobel laureate economist in front of several hundred people."

"Then he smiled and added, 'but we can talk about that later.' And so we did, on and off, ever since. Milton was kind, candid, generous with his time, and displayed remarkable personal integrity. I'll miss him," said Coulson.

"When Milton Friedman died on November 16 at the age of 94, the school choice movement lost its founder."

Down-to-Earth

That, perhaps, is what those who had the pleasure of meeting him will remember most about Friedman.

Though his work as an economist—now being carried on by millions whose work has been influenced by his ideas—was hailed the world over, by scientists and heads of state alike, Friedman remained down-to-earth until the end.

"His ideas, energy, and reputation all played major roles in the creation of The Heartland Institute—the first free-market 'think tank' devoted to a particular state's public policy issues—in 1984," said Heartland Institute founder and President Joe Bast. "Today there are some 40 similar think tanks, and Heartland has moved on to become a national organization. We are all Milton Friedman's legacy."



"Over the years, Dr. Friedman was generous toward me with his advice and assistance, providing often-lengthy comments on books and policy study manuscripts, recommending that students and academics contact me, and encouraging me in many ways," Bast said. "He was always generous with his time, never harsh or judgmental in his criticism, and always optimistic. He was a teacher, a mentor, and a philosophical touchstone that could be counted on, no matter how stormy the political climate might be."

Bast noted Friedman's historical importance, saying, "Few people actually change the course of history; fewer still change it in positive ways, ways that benefit the lives of millions and even billions of people. Milton Friedman was such a person. It was an incredible honor to have known and worked with him."

Karla Dial (dial@heartland.org) is managing editor of *School Reform News*.

INTERNET INFO

A collection of tributes to Milton Friedman, video clips, and links to some of his work is available on The Heartland Institute's Web site at <http://www.heartland.org/friedman.cfm>.

Election

Continued from page 1

various state House seats. Republican Gov. Mark Sanford, who has championed school choice over the past several years, retained his post, as did state Reps. Jim Harrison (R-Columbia) and Tracy Edge (R-North Myrtle Beach).

Twenty-four hours after the polls closed, only about 217 votes separated Democrat Jim Rex from Republican challenger and strong school choice advocate Karen Floyd in the race for state school superintendent, with Rex leading.

That race, as well as three others featuring strong school choice advocates, all Republicans—Andre Bauer for lieutenant governor, Danny Stacy for House District 29, and Wallace Scarborough for House District 115—were too close to call at press time, headed for automatic recounts by November 15.

“It was a great night,” Page said. “We’ve been saying the question isn’t whether [school choice] is going to happen, but when. The sooner it happens, the better off children in South Carolina will be.”

“Though conservative voters woke up to a newly ‘blue’ world on November 8, the results of the midterm election could mean two states will soon have more school choice.”

Level Field

In Utah, where a school voucher bill for low-income students was narrowly scuttled in the state legislature earlier this year, choice candidates gained five seats in the state House, two on the state school board, and one in the Senate, according to Nancy Pomeroy, communications director of the advocacy group Parents for Choice in Education (PCE).

“We’ve been doing the happy dance all night,” Pomeroy said the morning after the election. “We think it changes significantly our ability to get legislation through. We now have a great chance of getting a bill passed this year that will greatly help low-income families.”

Though the gains don’t give choice advocates a majority in Utah, they help level a playing field that “has been dominated by the Utah Education Association” teachers union, Pomeroy said.

PCE hopes to use the new officials to press forward on all kinds of education reform, not just vouchers.

“We’re going to champion merit pay for teachers, having a way to get rid of teachers that aren’t doing a good job, and the 65 percent solution,” which ensures 65 percent of schools’ budgets goes directly to classroom instruction, Pomeroy said. “When you’re on a roll, you’re on a roll.”

Karla Dial (dial@heartland.org) is managing editor of School Reform News.

Elections in Which School Choice Played Key Role

STATE	OFFICE	PRO-SCHOOL CHOICE CANDIDATE	PLATFORM	RESULT
Alaska	Governor	Sarah Palin, R	Supports choice, charters, cyber schools, homeschooling	W
Arizona	Governor	Len Munsil, R	Supports parental choice, charter expansion	L
	U.S. Senate	Sen. Jon Kyl, R	Supports choice and charters	W
	State Education Chief	Superintendent Tom Horne, R	Supports choice and charters	W
Arkansas	Governor	Asa Hutchinson, R	Major advocate for school choice and charters	L
California	Governor	Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger, R	Supports charters	W
Colorado	Governor	Bob Beauprez, R	Supports charter expansion	L
Connecticut	U.S. Senate	Sen. Joe Lieberman, I	Supports private school choice programs for low-income students	W
Delaware	U.S. Senate	Sen. Tom Carper, D	Supports charters and school choice	W
Florida	Governor	Charlie Crist, R	Supports vouchers and charters	W
	U.S. Senate	Katherine Harris, R	Supports vouchers	L
Hawaii	Governor	Gov. Linda Lingle, R	Supports charters	W
Idaho	Governor	C.L. “Butch” Otter, R	Supports charters, choice	W
	State Education Chief	Tom Luna, R	Supports parental involvement, choice, and charters	W
Indiana	U.S. Senate	Steve Osborn, L	Supports vouchers	L
Iowa	Governor	Jim Nussle, R	Supports choice, charters	L
Maine	Governor	Chandler Woodcock, R	Supports charters, choice	L
	U.S. Senate	Sen. Olympia Snowe, R	Supports charters, limited school choice, education savings accounts	W
Massachusetts	Governor	Kerry Healey, R	Supports lifting charter school cap	L
Michigan	Governor	Dick DeVos, R	Supports school choice	L
Minnesota	Governor	Gov. Tim Pawlenty, R	Supports school choice, online learning, and charters	W
Mississippi	U.S. Senate	Sen. Trent Lott, R	Supports choice, charters	W
Missouri	U.S. Senate	Sen. Jim Talent, R	Supports choice, charters	L
Montana	U.S. Senate	Sen. Conrad Burns, R	Supports charters, choice	L
Nebraska	U.S. Senate	Peter Ricketts, R	Supports vouchers	L
Nevada	U.S. Senate	Sen. John Ensign, R	Supports parental choice, charter expansion	W
New Hampshire	Governor	Jim Coburn, R	Strong advocate for choice, charters, and vouchers	L
New Mexico	Governor	John Dendahl, R	Strong advocate for tax scholarship programs	L
	U.S. Senate	Allen McCulloch, R	Supports parental choice in education	L
New York	Governor	John Faso, R	Supports lifting charter school cap, tax credit scholarships	L
Ohio	Governor	Ken Blackwell, R	Supports all forms of school choice	L
	U.S. Senate	Sen. Mike DeWine, R	Supports charters, choice programs, and education savings accounts	L
Oklahoma	Governor	Ernest Istook, Jr., R	Supports school choice, charters, and vouchers	L
Oregon	Governor	Ron Saxton, R	Supports increasing charters, statewide open enrollment	L
Pennsylvania	U.S. Senate	Sen. Rick Santorum, R	Supports parental choice, charters, expanded school choice	L
Rhode Island	U.S. Senate	Sen. Lincoln Chafee, R	Supports charter school expansion, school choice	L
South Carolina	State Education Chief	Karen Floyd, R	Supports vouchers, charters, cyber schools, and private schools	?
	Governor	Mark Sanford, R	Supports choice, tax credits	W
	Lieutenant Governor	Andre Bauer, R		?
	Comptroller General	Richard Eckstrom, R		W
	Treasurer	Thomas Ravenel, R		W
	State House District 18	Phillip Shoopman, R		W
	State House District 29	Danny Stacy, R		?
	State House District 36	Joe Mahaffey, R		W
	State House District 45	Mick Mulvaney, R		W
	State House District 60	Phillip Lowe, R		W
	State House District 63	Kris Crawford, R		W
	State House District 75	State Rep. Jim Harrison, R		W
	State House District 79	Michael Letts, R		L
	State House District 104	State Rep. Tracy Edge, R		W
	State House District 115	Wallace Scarborough, R		?
	State House District 119	Suzanne Piper, R		L
Tennessee	Governor	Jim Bryson, R	Avid school choice supporter, promotes charter school expansion	L
Texas	Governor	Gov. Rick Perry, R	Supports more school choice	W
	U.S. Senate	Sen. Kay Bailey Hutchison, R	Supports charters, increasing school choice	W
Utah	U.S. Senate	Sen. Orrin Hatch, R	Supports vouchers, education savings accounts, charter schools	W
	State School Board Member	Chris Barden, R		L
	State House District 10	George Garwood, R		L
	State House District 21	Jeff Clifford, R		L
	State House District 22	Deena Ely, R		W
	State House District 28	Tom Wright, R		L
	State House District 29	Phil Conder, R		L
	State House District 34	Phil Tommassian, R		L
	State House District 35	Jay Burmmett, R		L
	State House District 37	Sandy Thackeray, R		L
	State House District 44	Raymond Poole, R		L
	State House District 46	Robin Bagley, R		L
	State House District 52	Carl Wimmer, R		W
Vermont	Governor	Gov. Jim Douglas, R	Supports school choice	W
	U.S. Senate	Richard Tarrant, R	Open to school choice, federal funding for homeschooling	L
Virginia	U.S. Senate	Sen. George Allen, R	Supports education savings accounts, charters	L
Washington	U.S. Senate	Mike McGavick, R	Supports school choice and charters	L
West Virginia	U.S. Senate	Sen. Robert Byrd, D	Supports federally funded school choice and charter schools.	W
Wisconsin	Governor	Mark Green, R	Supports charters and removing cap on voucher program	L
	U.S. Senate	Robert Lorge, R	Supports education savings accounts, charters, expanding Milwaukee voucher program statewide, tuition tax credits for higher education	L

Compiled through original research. The Center for Education Reform provided information on gubernatorial and U.S. Senate races.

Mental Health

Continued from page 1

children from birth through 18.

The opposition has assumed greater urgency now that federal grants for implementing the law are beginning to materialize.

With psychological studies indicating one in five children is either anxious, moody, or disruptive, some educators and lawmakers focused on children's mental health issues are convinced public policy must address the issue. Without early intervention and effective treatment, they say, troubled children may fail in school, be unable to find acceptable employment, and thus face poverty in adulthood.

"Two years after a new law was passed in Illinois creating the framework for schools to screen students for mental health disorders, ... some groups say the alleged cost savings do not justify a program under which schools are overstepping their authority."

State Standards

The Illinois law integrates Social and Emotional Learning Standards into the state's public school system. The standards outline grade-specific, measurable performance on social and emotional development expectations for Illinois children under age 18.

Every school district in the state is required to integrate the standards into its curricula.



Rod Blagojevich
Governor - Illinois

Gov. Rod Blagojevich (D) in its annual report, released October 10.

Wrong Role

Under the Children's Mental Health Act of 2003, more than 15,226 Illinois schoolchildren were screened in 2005 for "mental health crises"—sometimes verbally, and other times through a computerized touch-screen survey, to ascertain feelings of depression, isolation, whether they are being bullied, and other personal questions.

Of those surveyed, 5,342 low-risk youngsters were "able to be stabilized and served in their community," saving taxpayers \$44.1 million in hospitalization costs, according to the report.

But many mental health professionals and parents' rights groups argue

this is not a proper role for the schools. Opponents of the law say a better approach is to let private medical insurance cover the services and to increase public assistance for mental health care for the uninsured, as well as ensuring only qualified people assess the students and guard their private information.

Concerns over Stigma

Lee Carty, communications director for the Bazelon Center for Mental Health Law, a 34-year-old Washington, DC-based advocacy group for the mentally disabled, said the two main concerns over school-based mental health screening are the potential to stigmatize students by inaccurately assessing them as having mental health problems, and using available funds solely to screen, rather than to financially assist, those who have serious mental health needs.

"Identifying those with mental health needs is one issue, but providing them with needed services is something completely different," Carty said. "Schools shouldn't be screening children—qualified mental health professionals should be."

One of the Bazelon Center's key concerns is to reduce the stigma of mental health care. The Bush administration rooted its 2002 New Freedom Commission on Mental Health in advocates' concerns that children were being unfairly stigmatized by their unmet needs. The commission's goal of identifying and eliminating unfair policies

ushered in children's mental health acts nationwide.

In 2003, Illinois was one of the first states to pass such a law. Although the Bazelon Center opposes mandatory screening in schools, the group advocates ensuring those who have been diagnosed with mental disorders get the proper treatment.

"Parents, teachers, and others may fear that once identified, a mental health diagnosis will influence the way a child is treated," the Bazelon Center states on its Web site. "Parents may also fear they will be blamed for their child's mental disability. As a result, families may not seek services."

Irate Parents

Many psychologists, pediatricians, and parental rights advocates, as well as parents themselves, say the law should show more concern for privacy and family rights.

In 2006, proposals to require schools to obtain written parental consent before screening a minor for mental health were stonewalled in the Illinois legislature.

A sponsor of the original bill, state Rep. Patti Bellock (R-Hinsdale), worked with pro-family groups in the most recent legislative session to amend the bill to require parental involvement. Parents' rights advocates had pointed out Bellock's legislation did not specifically require parental consent for screening when the bill passed three

years ago.

"While we want to make sure those children needing mental health care are not overlooked, it is important that parents be involved," Bellock said.

The amendment failed to reach a floor vote in the Senate. At press time, Bellock had no concrete plans to reintroduce it, saying a public education effort is needed first.

Fran Eaton (featon@illinoisreview.com) is a freelance journalist based in Chicago who reports on family issues and education alternatives.

INTERNET INFO

"Frequently Asked Questions About the ICMHP and the Children's Mental Health Plan," <http://www.ivpa.org/childrensmhpf/faq/faq.pdf>

S.B. 1951, Children's Mental Health Act of 2003, <http://www.ilga.gov/legislation/93/sb/09300sb1951enr.htm>

Bazelon Center for Mental Health Law, <http://www.bazelon.org/about/index.htm>

President's New Freedom Commission on Mental Health, <http://www.mentalhealthcommission.gov/>

Mental Health Laws Pose Growing Threat, Parents Say

Illinois may have been the first state to pass a law making mental health screenings a regular part of the public school system, but it's not the only one. Earlier this year, similar laws were passed in Michigan and New York, and one in Indiana is already the subject of a federal lawsuit.

Two years ago, Michael and Theresa Rhoads' 15-year-old daughter came home from her Mishawaka, Indiana school and asked about two mental disorders a computerized program called TeenScreen had determined she had. Outraged over what they saw as an invasion of their daughter's privacy, the Rhoads sought legal counsel from the Rutherford Institute, a civil liberties legal group based in Tennessee.



Jackie Walorski
State Rep.
Lakeville, Indiana

A firestorm followed as mental health screening became the topic of local talk shows. Parents led a charge against the Indiana mea-

sure. State Rep. Jackie Walorski (R-Lakeville) is now working to repeal Indiana's two-year-old children's mental health program, which was modeled after Illinois'.

Parental rights advocates statewide were encouraged in late October when the Indiana Mental Health Committee opposed mandatory screening for the state's children, although it did recommend the state board of education continue to address mental health issues. The overall effect of the decision was basically to water down the program.

Growing Threat to Privacy

In October, Karen Hayes, director of the Illinois chapter of Concerned Women for America, and Minnesota pediatrician Dr. Karen Effrem went to Washington, DC to share with federal lawmakers their concerns about the Federal Mental Health Action Agenda—a collaboration of several federal agencies, including the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Department of Education, and Social Security Administration.

The federal group lays out a blueprint for destigmatizing mental health disorders through programs

such as TeenScreen, the computerized touch-screen survey that diagnosed the Rhoads' daughter.

Hayes and Effrem expressed concern that state by state, children's mental health screening could develop into an inescapable national program over time.

"[The Federal Mental Health Action Agenda has] resulted in the promotion of a whole series of federal grants and programs to the states for the mental health screening and intervention of children beginning in infancy, despite documented problems with the scientific validity, safety, effectiveness, and cost of both the screening and the associated interventions," Effrem told lawmakers.

"In addition, there are grave concerns regarding whether the federal government should be involved in something that has such profound implications for individual autonomy, parental authority, freedom of conscience, and privacy," Effrem said.

Parents should guide their children's physical and psychological health care, Effrem said. As a pediatrician, she believes decisions about a child's care are between the parents and their chosen physician, and should not involve the government.

— Fran Eaton

California Schools Adopting E-Tools, but Teacher Unions Are Wary: Study

By Daschell M. Phillips

On September 26, the University of California and California Department of Education released the Golden State's first statewide study of virtual schools and e-tools for education.

The study, "The State of Online Learning in California: A Look at Current K-12 Policies and Practices," concluded the expansion of online education in California mirrors advances across the country, as states from Florida to Washington offer myriad online education options for students. But the report also identified several problems with the state's adoption of new technologies.

"The report started out as an ad hoc committee to find out what was happening with virtual tools in schools throughout the state of California," explained coauthor Harold Vietti, who runs an online school called the eScholar Academy, based in Red Bluff, California.

Vietti said California schools are using virtual tools in many ways, such as providing more computer access in schools and using vendor- or self-designed educational programs. The tools are most popular among schools serving fewer than 2,000 students, along with charter schools.

"On September 26, the University of California and California Department of Education released the Golden State's first statewide study of virtual schools."

Facing Hurdles

Virtual schools take many forms, ranging from educational software used at home or in computer centers or classrooms, to schools whose entire curricula require the use of e-tools such as phones, computers, and software that allow students to interact remotely with teachers in real time.

Although California offers online Advanced Placement (AP) classes, credit recovery courses, and online charter schools, Vietti said bureaucracy has prevented California from making online courses part of educational policy, as other states have.

"California is a technology leader, but I believe that there is a fear that virtual school technology may take jobs away from teachers," Vietti said. "Because of this fear, California is a watch-and-wait state."

Fred Glass, a spokesman for the California Federation of Teachers union, said teachers understand technology's role as a tool in the classroom and are not afraid of virtual programs taking their place.

"Most teachers are very excited about



technology tools that are user-friendly and match up with educational goals," Glass said.

Although most teachers welcome the technology that is being created for the classroom, Glass said, some are frustrated by programs that are too complex and hence require too much training.

Learning Differently

One of the concerns outlined in the study was that teachers, parents, and stakeholders fear the way virtual schools will change the way education is delivered to children, as well as the roles teachers will play in the future of education.

"Teachers are more, if not equally, important in virtual schools than in the classroom," Vietti said. "My teachers work about eight to 10 hours a day, working with students online, including weekends and holidays."

Kevin Youngblood, president of OdysseyWare, Inc., a Web-based curriculum company in Arizona, said educational software isn't designed to replace teachers but to help them enhance children's learning experiences.

"Learning can be delivered in a variety of ways," Youngblood said. "We offer a tool in a teacher's toolbox."

Increasing Access

Youngblood, whose software is used by students enrolled in approximately 100 virtual schools nationwide, said students have access to OdysseyWare courses online at any time.

That flexibility is what makes online education especially helpful to at-risk and special-education students, Youngblood said.

"Virtual schools work better for [these] students than traditional schools because individualized learning allows students to work at their own pace," Youngblood said. "They can work around other things in

their lives and can access other resources to help them."

Developing the Future

Another concern outlined in the study was

a fear that heavy reliance on online tools will widen the gap between students who have regular access to the Internet and those who do not—a concern Vietti said serves as an excuse for California's educational system to stay behind the times.

"Everyone can have access to computers," Vietti said. "The cost of computers is going down, and instead of buying books, schools should be buying computers. We are not preparing students for the 8-to-5 office work week—we are preparing them for what the world might look like years down the road."

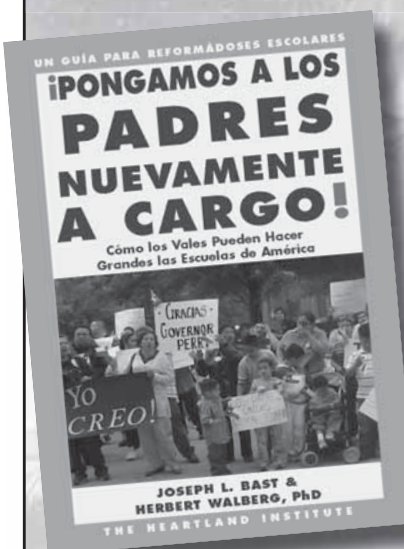
The future workplace, Vietti said, may include conducting business on cell phones in the park or grading papers on the beach in Hawaii—something that isn't as universal across all industries today as it will be when today's students reach adulthood.

Daschell M. Phillips (dashwriter@aol.com) is a freelance writer in Chicago.

INTERNET INFO

"The State of Online Learning in California: A Look at Current K-12 Policies and Practices," by Harold Vietti, et al., is available through PolicyBot™, The Heartland Institute's free online research database. Point your Web browser to <http://www.policybot.org> and search for document #20153.

New Bilingual Edition!



LET'S PUT PARENTS BACK IN CHARGE!

by Joseph L. Bast & Herbert J. Walberg, Ph.D.

The Heartland Institute has released a new bilingual edition of its popular book, *Let's Put Parents Back in Charge!* The new edition includes both English and Spanish texts.

Let's Put Parents Back in Charge! was written by Joseph L. Bast and Herbert J. Walberg and first published by The Heartland Institute in 2003. It was a groundbreaking tool in the school choice movement, making the case for competition and markets in K-12 education in clear and easy-to-understand language. Some 70,000 copies have been distributed throughout the country by elected officials, education reform advocates, parent groups, and others.

Heartland is working closely with grassroots school choice organizations, charter schools, Hispanic business and civic groups, and national school choice groups to distribute the new book. If you are interested in assisting with distribution, please contact Heartland Government Relations Manager Ralph Conner at 312/377-4000, email conner@heartland.org.

Individual copies can be ordered for \$5.95 in

The Heartland Institute's online store at <http://www.heartland.org>.



Higher Ed Reforms Face Tough Slog

By Neal McCluskey

On September 27, one day after U.S. Secretary of Education Margaret Spellings announced major plans to reform American postsecondary education, a panel of higher education analysts, stakeholders, and advocates—this author included—convened at the Cato Institute in Washington, DC to debate her proposals.

If our discussion was any indication, renovating America's ivory tower is going to be a tough job. The secretary's proposals fell under much criticism at the Cato panel and elsewhere.

Creating a Commission

Spellings' road to reform started in September 2005, when she appointed a commission to formulate a "national strategy" for American higher education. Charles Miller, a friend of Spellings and President George W. Bush who had helped craft Texas' predecessor to the No Child Left Behind Act, and who once chaired the University of Texas board of regents, was named the group's chairman.

The rest of the commission was composed of current and former university presidents, heads of higher education advocacy groups, and representatives from corporations such as IBM and Boeing. For nearly a year the commis-

sion tackled numerous topics in hearings around the country.

At the end of August 2006, all but one commission member voted to approve a final report that called for increasing aid to poor students, encouraging colleges to measure student learning over time, and creating a federal database with information on every postsecondary student in the nation.

Preparing a Response

A month passed between the report's approval and its presentation to the secretary, but Spellings started planning her response well before its official release.

When Spellings received the report on September 26, she had a plan ready to go. She announced the administration would focus primarily on better aligning high school curricula with college entry requirements, increasing need-based financial aid, and creating a database to track the performance of every college student—and therefore every college—in the country.

Miller was the first speaker at Cato's event. He stressed the need to gather and publicize as much data on colleges as possible, with the goal of enabling students, parents, and policymakers to make informed decisions about higher education.

"It's necessary to have an information

system which provides results and identifies behavior related to those results," Miller said. "Currently, higher education is replete with opaque, complex information systems which are not informative."

"On September 27, one day after U.S. Secretary of Education Margaret Spellings announced major plans to reform American postsecondary education, a panel of higher education analysts, stakeholders, and advocates—this author included—convened at the Cato Institute in Washington, DC to debate her proposals."

Publicizing Personal Data

The problem with Miller's focus, and with the database both the commission and Spellings endorsed, is that it would require schools to furnish information many institutions and students consider private.

In addition, the threat that the federal government might eventually require schools to give standardized tests to all students troubles many colleges, especially private schools that value their autonomy.

Christopher Nelson, president of Saint John's College in Annapolis, Maryland, made those fears clear at the Cato event, voicing an opinion the National Association of Independent Colleges and Universities had been articulating long before the report's release.

"We should promote the desire to learn over the mania to test performance," Nelson said.

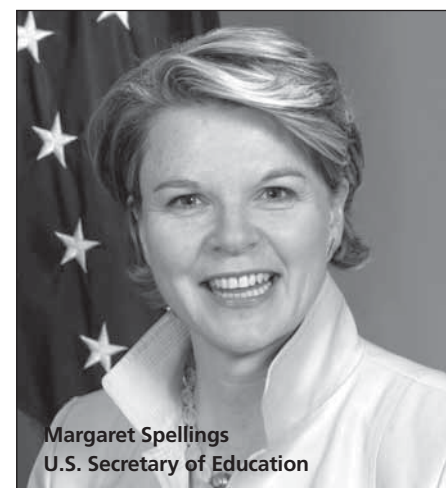
Aiding and Abetting

The second major hurdle for higher education reformers will be to address what is likely the ivory tower's greatest problem: affordability. How do you ground tuition prices that for decades have grown at rates exceeding even inflation in health care?

For the commission and Spellings, the answer is to target aid much more precisely to the poor. But Anya Kamenetz, author of the book *Generation Debt* (Riverhead Books, 2006), focused on a broader swath of Americans at Cato's panel, noting loans are becoming increasingly larger parts of financial aid packages, and that lending companies such as Sallie Mae are making huge profits off of them.

Increasing Federal Aid

To make college more affordable for all Americans, Kamenetz called not just for the expansion of Pell Grants but also



for the replacement of federal programs that back loans from lending companies, with initiatives that give federal money directly to students.

"It's really an elephant in the room when you talk about issues like transparency and accountability," Kamenetz said. "That is the external system that is fed by the federal financial aid programs that cause very large companies to make very large amounts of profits off of growing student loans."

The federal government, however, has been increasing overall aid availability for decades, yet college prices keep rising. Indeed, as I argued at the event, such aid could very well be the problem: As long as it keeps on rising to keep up with prices, schools have no incentives to keep their tuition increases small.

Public realization of that, colliding with students' and schools' desires to keep aid coming, might easily spell even greater gridlock for ivory tower reform than disputes over federal data collection and No Child Left Behind for colleges.

Together, these problems leave very much in doubt whether anyone in Washington will be able to renovate the nation's ivory tower.

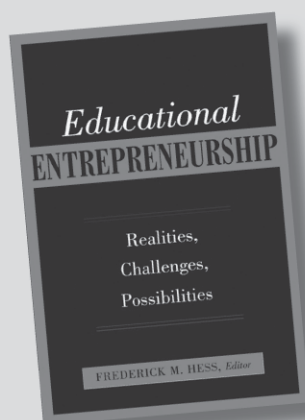
Neal McCluskey (nmccluskey@cato.org) is a policy analyst at the Cato Institute's Center for Educational Freedom.

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ies at the American Enterprise
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INTERNET INFO

Webcast of Cato panel, <http://www.cato.org/event.php?eventid=3193>

A Test of Leadership: Charting the Future of U.S. Higher Education, published by the U.S. Department of Education in September 2006, is available through PolicyBot™, The Heartland Institute's free online research database. Point your Web browser to <http://www.policybot.org> and search for document #20152.

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Transfers Affect Everyone

Discipline, amount of homework surprise many after moving from low-rated schools

By Jennifer Mrozowski

Transferring from a 660-student public school to a 47-student private one was a big shock for Kayla Belser.

At her old school, the sixth-grader had lots of friends, liked her teacher, and didn't have much homework. At Christ Emmanuel Christian Academy in East Walnut Hills, [Ohio], preparing for college is daily, hard work.

Kayla, 11, is one of 830 Cincinnati students taking advantage of a new state program that allows kids in poorly performing public schools to transfer to private schools at no cost to them. Students get state-funded vouchers worth up to \$5,000 to pay the private school tuition. Parents whose children are assigned to low-rated schools no longer have to feel stuck.

New Digs

Eight weeks after the program began, Ohio figured to spend \$10 million on a voucher program to assist 3,141 students across the state. Locally, students assigned to 17 Cincinnati Public Schools were eligible. They make up the largest number of voucher recipients of any district in the state.

All over town, the impact is widening: Dozens of private schools are adjusting

to hundreds of new students. Public and charter schools are coping with student losses and the millions of dollars in state funding that went with the kids.

Children are navigating new schools and trying to make new friends, while adjusting to new discipline codes and challenging coursework. Some kids are encountering religion classes, perhaps for the first time.

"My old school was way bigger than my new school," Kayla says. But size is just the start of it.

"I would usually see a fight every day," Kayla says of life at John P. Parker School, a low-rated Cincinnati Public School in Madisonville, where 100 students took vouchers and left.

New Curricula

Change is happening all over.

At St. Francis Seraph School in Over-the-Rhine, enrollment increased from about 150 students last year to 169 this year, including 21 voucher recipients. Students are learning the tough discipline policies of Principal Wanda Hill and why she refers to her office as "boot camp."

At St. Boniface School in Northside, with 29 voucher recipients, enrollment jumped from 150 to 170. Principal Sister Ann Gorman held open houses and a breakfast to help students fit in.

At John P. Parker School, Kayla's old school, the exodus of 100 students helped lead to the loss of eight staff positions, including teachers and instructional aides.

Parker is rated in "Academic Emergency," the state's lowest grade for achievement. Teacher turnover was so great last year that Kayla's fifth-grade



class had three different teachers. Still Kayla begged her mother, Chanda Heard, to let her stay at the only school she had ever attended.

"She was extremely apprehensive and then teary-eyed the first couple of weeks," says Heard, who enrolled another daughter and a niece at Christ Emmanuel, too. Heard also has an 11th-grade daughter at Walnut Hills High School and an eighth-grade son who was at Walnut Hills but returned to Parker because of slipping grades.

New Challenges

The Rev. Carol Dantley, Christ Emmanuel's principal, says she expected some new students to struggle. The changes affect staffers, too, she says.

School enrollment jumped by 56 percent this year, from 30 to 47 students. Most of the increase was because of the voucher program, which pays tuition that varies from \$2,800 to \$3,350 a year, depending on grade.

Despite its benefit to certain schools,

the voucher program has come with challenges. Notably, most private schools [had] not received state voucher payments, expected [in October]. Some schools also are experiencing overcrowding.

Cincinnati Junior Academy in Clifton, which saw enrollment more than triple from 19 students last year to 65 this year, is at capacity. Adding any more students will mean taking away the library to use for a classroom, Principal Sherree Herdman says. Herdman instead is considering adding classroom trailers to make room for more children.

Schools like Christ Emmanuel are getting by on their old budgets and staffing levels. Like last year, the school has just four teachers. The \$45,000 in voucher money expected from the state eventually may help pay for additional supplies, support staff, and technology, but not yet, Dantley says.

New Standards

Many students also are behind their

CONTINUED on right

Ohio

Continued from page 1

education, not litigation."

Official Oversight

But the justices left the door open for a challenge to the way the \$475 million program is operated—especially the practice of allowing for-profit firms to run every aspect of the school, from hiring teachers to choosing a curriculum. Those issues would have to be decided where the case was originally filed, in Franklin County Common Pleas Court.

"The fundamental problem is the lack of oversight by public officials,"

"This decision allows all schools to return their focus to education, not litigation."

CHAD READLER
ATTORNEY

said Tom Mooney, president of the Ohio Federation of Teachers, which was part of the coalition that filed the lawsuit in 2001. "Taxpayers have lost control of their education tax dollars."

At the heart of the majority opinion was the belief that the legislature can create and fund alternative schools such as charter schools—called community schools in Ohio—without violating the state's charge to operate a common education system for all children.

"In enacting community school legislation, the General Assembly added to the traditional school system by providing for statewide schools that have more flexibility in their operation," Justice Judith Ann Lanzinger wrote for the majority.

'Fragmented System'

In her dissent, Justice Alice Robie Resnick sharply disagreed with that

view, essentially concluding that her colleagues were misreading history. The framers of Ohio's Constitution, she said, specifically rejected the idea of a fragmented public school system.

They "rejected the proliferation of diverse schools in favor of a single system," Resnick wrote. "They also rejected the idea of competition among school districts and a variety of sectarian schools, viewing competition as inefficient, divisive, and ineffective."

The court took an unusually long time—11 months—to issue the ruling. With the November 7 election approaching, most observers believed the court would further delay a ruling until voters choose a new governor and State Board of Education.

Federal Case

With the ruling, attention shifted to a federal lawsuit challenging the legality of the charter school system. That suit



was filed in Dayton in June by the Ohio Education Association.

Gary Allen, the union's president, said he did not expect the ruling to affect his group's lawsuit.

Readler disagreed. "I think this case will play a very informative role in settling the federal case," he said.

This article originally appeared in the October 26, 2006 edition of The Cleveland Plain Dealer. © 2006 The Plain Dealer. All rights reserved. Reprinted with permission.

INTERNET INFO

The Ohio Supreme Court's decision in *State ex rel. Ohio Congress of Parents & Teachers v. State Bd. of Edn.*, October 25, 2006, is available through PolicyBot™, The Heartland Institute's free online research database. Point your Web browser to <http://www.policybot.org> and search for document #20149.

CONTINUED from left

grade levels, Dantley says.

"The amount of homework itself has been overwhelming to many children. The message is, 'This is the standard. This is what you are going to meet, but we will help you get there.'"

Dantley says she turned away a handful of students because she worried they would not be successful.

She says the staff now is working hard with the new students. If a child is stuck on something, the teacher works with the student until he understands. That's the beauty of having small classes of just 12 to 14 kids, Dantley says. She also frequently calls children aside to offer support. Kayla says she was one.

"She really got me going in the school," Kayla says. "She said not to be afraid and that I was smart. Every time she saw me looking gloomy or down, she took me aside and said, 'Kayla, you can do it.'"

"830 Cincinnati students [are] taking advantage of a new state program that allows kids in poorly performing public schools to transfer to private schools at no cost to them."

New 'Families'

Other schools are working to help new students adjust as well.

At St. Boniface School in Northside, students are organizing themselves in "families." Older students are assigned to help younger students, and seventh- and eighth-graders walk hand-in-hand with kindergartners and first-graders to Mass.

For Catholic schools, the voucher program is welcome after years of declining enrollment. But the program has not been the boon that some thought it would be.

Locally, more than 7,000 students were eligible for the voucher program in this first year, but only 830 took advantage. Catholic schools enrolled about 580 of the voucher recipients but still, enrollment was down. Some 48,358 kids were enrolled on the first day of school in Archdiocese of Cincinnati schools, a 2 percent drop from last year.

Still, Brother Joe Kamis, the Archdiocese's superintendent, says the program is bringing much-needed money to his schools. Tuitions vary so widely that he couldn't estimate how much the schools will receive in voucher money this year.

He knows the schools will welcome the cash. "We were running good programs but with classes that were half-full. To bring in five new students doesn't really cost anything," Kamis says.

Jennifer Mrozowski (jmrozowski@enquirer.com) is a staff writer at the Cincinnati Enquirer. This article originally appeared in the October 8 edition of the newspaper. Reprinted with permission.

Cincinnati Public Schools Lose Students to Vouchers



Cincinnati Public Schools lost 510 students this year to vouchers. The remaining voucher recipients are kindergartners or charter students who would have been assigned to the poor-performing schools. District Superintendent Rosa Blackwell declined to be interviewed about vouchers because of a scheduling issue, district spokeswoman Janet Walsh said.

The student losses could cost the system about \$3.3 million in state aid, according to the Ohio Department of Education.

At Parker, Kayla's old school, enrollment dropped from 660 students last year to 515 this year, according to an unofficial count. Voucher recipients represented most of the enrollment drop, and the overall decline caused the school to revise its budget from \$4.16 million to \$3.33 million, Walsh says.

Changing Ways

Teacher Patsy Holmes says the changes have been difficult. Parker lost eight of 41 teaching positions at the beginning of the year. The shuffle of teachers, who were sent to other schools with vacancies, caused a disruption to students, Holmes says. Classes also are larger, she adds.

But Walsh says the district's schools aren't concentrating on their losses. Instead, they are working to improve academics.

Parker, for instance, has more teacher development and coaching this year. Teachers are working in teams and with mentors.

"Cincinnati Public Schools has a game plan for improving student achievement in the voucher schools and the schools

not affected by the voucher program," Walsh says. All schools, she says, "but especially those struggling with student achievement, are getting intensive support at the schoolhouse."

Returning Students

Yet the disruption continues at some schools, like Parker, which first had to adjust to a loss of students and now are seeing some return. Overall, 41 voucher recipients have come back to Cincinnati Public Schools or never followed through with a voucher, Walsh says.

Holmes says some students returned to Parker because the school offers better services for students with special needs than many private schools. And unlike private schools, she says, the public district doesn't turn children away.

While the public and private schools work out their challenges, students continue to adjust.

Kayla says she misses her friends from Parker, but she likes her new school more. She has been recognized at Christ Emmanuel, receiving a star for responsibility, and she recently achieved the top score on a science test of all the sixth-, seventh-, and eighth-graders.

"I love Christ Emmanuel," Kayla says. "The teachers are very nice, and if I don't understand something, they stick with it until I understand."

"The teachers really pay attention to you because they don't have to walk around stopping fights all the time. Now that I'm going to Christ Emmanuel, I see that's not how school should be."

— Jennifer Mrozowski
Cincinnati Enquirer



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Protests Call for Public School Exodus

By Michael Coulter

Houston lawyer Bruce Shortt refers to himself as an ordinary guy who “lives in flyover country.” But he has an unusual pastime that has attracted both critics and supporters: He’s working to encourage parents to “leave behind” public schools.

Shortt said if parents take their Christian beliefs seriously, they will do everything possible to ensure their children get a thoroughly Christian education. A growing segment of the faith community is joining Shortt’s call for an exodus, saying the public school system is hostile to their values and unresponsive to their concerns.

They claim to be responsible for most of the 1 million children nationwide now being homeschooled.

“As Christian parents, we have an obligation to provide our children with a Christian education, but unfortunately, Christians have developed a government school habit,” Shortt explained. “The purpose of the resolutions is to force parents and pastors to confront our disobedience in the education of our children and its consequences. Government schools are destroying our children spiritually, morally, and intellectually. We need to create a new public education system—a system that is ‘public’ in that it is open to all, but that is owned and controlled by parents and the church.”

Encouraging Exodus

In 2004, 2005, and 2006, Shortt helped introduce at the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC)—a convention of cooperating Southern Baptist churches—a resolution encouraging parents to remove their children from public schools and provide them with a Christian education at home or in a Christian school.

Southern Baptists are the largest Protestant denomination in the United States, with 17 million members. Though prominent members supported Shortt’s resolution all three years, it has yet to be adopted.

“The courts say no creationism, no prayer in public schools,” Roger Moran, a member of the SBC executive committee who cosponsored the resolution

this year, told CNN in early September. “Humanism and evolution can be taught, but everything I believe is disallowed.”

Getting the Message Out

In 2005, Shortt also took his cause to state organizations of Southern Baptist churches, introducing state versions of the resolution he introduced at the national convention in 25 state conventions.

This year, a resolution urging an exodus from public schools was considered in 48 state conventions. It’s a method, Shortt said, that allows him “to get the message to the grassroots” of his denomination. During the time in which he has worked on these resolutions, he said, he “has seen a substantial increase in interest in the issue.”

Shortt, who has a law degree from Harvard and a doctorate in philosophy of science from Stanford University, has written a book, *The Harsh Truth about Public Schools* (Chalcedon/Ross House Books, 2004), which he hopes will encourage Christians of all denominations to take their children out of public schools. The 500-page book has 75 pages of references to studies and reports about public schools.

“Houston lawyer Bruce Shortt ... [is] working to encourage parents to ‘leave behind’ public schools.”

Urging Presbyterians

Shortt might be one of the loudest voices calling for people of faith to boycott public schools, but he’s not the only one.

The Rev. Steven Warhurst, associate pastor of Westminster Presbyterian Church in Kingsport, Tennessee, has taken up a similar cause in his own denomination, the Presbyterian Church in America (PCA). With more than 1,200 churches and 300,000 members, the PCA is the largest of the seven conservative Presbyterian denominations.

At the denomination’s 2005 nation-

al meeting, known as the General Assembly, Warhurst introduced a resolution urging parents to remove their children from public schools. The resolution failed to receive a majority of votes.

Since then, the procedure has changed for resolutions to be considered at the General Assembly, so Warhurst is now working through regional bodies of the denomination, known as presbyteries, to have similar resolutions considered. If a presbytery passes a resolution, it will then be considered by the whole denomination.

“I’ve had a lot of calls of support,” Warhurst said. “I think there’s a small movement [that is] supportive of these sentiments.”

Speaking at Churches

Warhurst said he has spoken at many churches in his denomination, urging parents to get serious about Christian education and to teach their children at home or send them to schools that will provide a Christian education.

“[These resolutions] have certainly raised some controversy, but it has started the debate,” Warhurst said.

Like Shortt, Warhurst claims the support of a prominent member of his denomination. The Rev. Dr. D. James Kennedy, pastor of Coral Ridge Presbyterian Church in Coral Gables, Florida, whose services are broadcast nationwide on television, has expressed his support for homeschooling and Christian education.

Acknowledging Contributions

Both Shortt and Warhurst cite the important role of Ray Moore and the organization he leads, Exodus Mandate, in promoting this movement.

A retired military chaplain, pastor, and political activist, Moore has helped draft resolutions and actions in several denominations. He’s also the author of a book, *Let the Children Go: Why Children Must be Removed from Public Schools NOW* (Ambassador-Emerald International, 2002), and he has produced a video by the same name.

Exodus Mandate maintains a Web site, <http://www.exodusmandate.org>,

with many documents, audio interviews, and links to other sites that promote Christian schools and homeschooling, as well as information about public schools’ shortcomings.

Separating School and State

Founded by Marshall Fritz in 1994, the Alliance for the Separation of School and State, like the Exodus Mandate, actively encourages parents to remove their kids from public schools. Unlike the other groups, the alliance does not limit its work to conservative Protestants. It includes Catholics, Mormons, Muslims, and nonreligious activists among its ranks.

Leaders of the “exodus” movement are not hoping that removing children from public schools will lead those schools to reform themselves.

“We are not urging school reform, because public schools are unreformable,” Shortt explained. “You can’t do Christian education in a public school.”

Rather, Shortt said, the goal is “to create a new ‘normal’ where Christian parents will see Christian education as the norm.”

Michael Coulter (mlcoulter@gcc.edu) teaches political science at Grove City College in Pennsylvania.

INTERNET INFO

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Exodus Mandate, <http://www.exodusmandate.org>

Alliance for the Separation of School and State, <http://www.schoolandstate.org/home.htm>

German Court Says Parents May Not Educate Children

By Michael Coulter

German parents lost their last legal appeal on September 11, 2006 when the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) allowed to stand a German Federal Constitutional Court (FCC) decision from November 2003 stating parents do not have a right to educate their children at home.

The case involved Fritz and Marianna Konrad, a Herbolzheim couple that wanted to homeschool their two children because they believed the public schools undermined their religious values.

In their legal battle to homeschool, the Konrads lost several court cases, including the one they appealed to Germany’s

highest court, the Federal Constitutional Court.

The American-based Home School Legal Defense Association reports approximately 500 children are homeschooled in Germany. Several parents who have attempted to homeschool have been fined and imprisoned because they have not complied with compulsory school attendance laws.

State Indoctrination

The Konrads appealed the German court’s decision to the ECHR, a special court that enforces the European Convention of Human Rights. They cited Article 2 of Protocol No. 1 of the Convention, which

says, “the state shall respect the right of parents to ensure such education and teaching is in conformity with their own religious and philosophical convictions.”

The ECHR stated in its *Konrad and Others v. German Decision* opinion that the German FCC had attempted to balance individual rights with “the state’s obligation to provide for education of responsible citizens who participate in a democratic and pluralistic society.”

The opinion characterized the FCC decision as expressing concern for the integration of all members into society.

No Surprise

American analysts said they were dis-

appointed by the decision, but not surprised.

“I’m never surprised when statism surfaces in Europe, because statism is so deep in Europe,” said Allan Carlson, president of the Howard Center, a Rockford, Illinois-based group that researches the family’s role in society. “European families are increasingly threatened by an anti-family bureaucracy and court system.”

Carlson said the German and EU courts ruled “it was in the children’s best interest to be indoctrinated in the prevailing social order.”

Michael Coulter (mlcoulter@gcc.edu) teaches political science at Grove City College in Pennsylvania.

Texas Senate Committee Examines Choice Options

By **Connie Sadowski**

On October 13, the Texas Senate Education Committee heard testimony addressing the mandate given by Lt. Gov. David Dewhurst (R) to evaluate the impact of successful school choice programs on students, parents, and teachers.

"The growing movement to let parents have more say in where, and how, their children are taught is healthy for public education," said state Sen. Kyle Janek (R-Houston), a member of the education committee. "What is needed is for government to stop standing in the way of this much-needed discussion."

The Senate committee, in preparation for the legislative session to begin January 9, invited attorneys to testify on the constitutionality of publicly funded vouchers, as well as experts to explain the pros and cons of school choice programs and charter schools.

State Sen. Florence Shapiro (R-Plano), the education committee chair, said she will make sure her committee's focus is on "what is truly in the best interest of the child," by working on a plan to ensure Texas schoolchildren who are not succeeding will have better choices, either at another public school or a private one.

The committee's report, due in December, will be subject to approval by a majority vote of the committee and will include recommended statutory or agency rulemaking changes and fiscal cost estimates.

Improving Communities

The impact of school choice is epitomized by the privately funded Horizon Program in San Antonio, said its founder, Robert Aguirre, at the hearing.

The program, currently in its eighth year, reached a peak in 2003-04, when it enrolled 2,032 students representing 15.8 percent of the Edgewood Independent School District (EISD). Any student in Edgewood ISD—the district with the lowest per-capita and household incomes in San Antonio—can use a privately funded Horizon voucher worth \$3,600 to \$4,700 to attend a private school or transfer to a public school.

Vouchers have been proven to revive inner-city neighborhoods, spur new housing starts, and increase the tax base for public school districts, Aguirre said. EISD's taxable property value per pupil increased from \$29,893 in 1997-98, when the Horizon program began, to \$50,550 in 2003-04, he said.

Before Horizon, Aguirre said, this area of San Antonio had no new home starts since 1955. He attributed the increase to new home builders who began advertising "educational vouchers as a benefit of home purchase." In addition, he testified, vouchers encourage districts to be more interested in parents' opinions.

When the EISD heard the Horizon program was forming, the district hired a professional polling company that "queried its families door to door and asked how the public school system could better serve them," Aguirre said.

Moving Forward

Ninety-nine percent of Horizon kids finish high school, compared to the EISD's 50 percent graduation rate, Aguirre said. Also, he noted, 90 percent of Horizon kids have gone on to higher education, compared to 53 percent state-wide and 35 percent in EISD.

At the hearing, state Sen. Mario Gallegos (D-Houston) disputed Aguirre's claim that parents like vouchers, saying his constituents in Houston don't want them. Aguirre disagreed, citing an April 2005 survey conducted by a Democratic pollster that showed 76 percent of Texas Hispanics want school choice, as do 72 percent of Houston's Hispanics.

Gallegos did not return later requests for information concerning when he last polled his constituency about vouchers.

Testifying for Choice

Though low-income parents found it difficult to attend the hearing on a workday, said Ken Hoagland, spokesperson for Texans for School Choice, a parental advocacy group based in Austin, "more than 100 parents did attend, and with many positive statements of support for a school choice pilot program in Texas."

During the hearing's public testimony portion, numerous parents testified they want to choose their child's school.

Aimee Cantu, a single mother of a 9-year-old student in the Horizon program, testified that her son's voucher boosted her confidence as a parent, "because I can now decide what is best for my child regardless of my economic status."

"On October 13, the Texas Senate Education Committee heard testimony addressing the mandate given by Lt. Gov. David Dewhurst to evaluate the impact of successful school choice programs on students, parents, and teachers."

Choosing Students

School choice opponents also testified at the hearing. Kathy Miller, president of Texas Freedom Network, an Austin-based organization of clergy and community leaders that has historically lobbied against vouchers, testified private and religious schools that accept tax dollars through "voucher schemes aren't required to accept all students who wish to attend.

"If a child lives in a neighborhood and walks through the doors of the public school," said Miller, "the public school will educate that child. [It] doesn't ask if they have a B average, and they don't ask if their parents are motivated. It doesn't ask if they have transportation to and from, and it doesn't ask if



David Dewhurst
Lt. Governor - Texas

they can bring their lunch. They teach them."

Janek asked Miller whether magnet schools—public schools with selective admissions requirements based on academic or performing arts abilities—"bother" her.

Because magnets are part of the public accountability system and "aren't taking money out of the public education pot," Miller said it's OK if magnet schools are selective while accepting public funds.

Preferring Public Schools

Houston lawyer Kaye DeWalt, formerly an attorney for the Houston Independent School District, urged the committee to consider the school choices already in place in the public school system.

Without identifying specific legal repercussions, DeWalt cautioned the committee that any plan for publicly funded vouchers should not include sectarian schools. DeWalt exercised school choice, she said, when her own children were enrolled in magnet schools.

"I am a living witness that [magnet] schools work and they do provide school choice," DeWalt said.

Charter schools, which enroll 90,000 students in 340 schools statewide, with 11 more to open in 2007, are becoming more popular, DeWalt said, because parents have a desire to "exercise what they perceive as choice." Smaller class sizes and the knowledge that some children just function better in different environments also make charters popular in Texas, DeWalt concluded.

Sure of Constitutionality

According to testimony presented by Institute for Justice staff attorney David Roland, "nothing in the federal constitution or the Texas constitution should prevent the Texas Legislature from



Mario Gallegos
State Senator
Houston, Texas

providing state-funded scholarships" to a private or public school.

"There is no constitutional barrier to religious schools' participation in a school choice program," said Roland, so long as the legislation "neither encourages or discourages religion, but merely permits parents to choose a religious school for their children from among other public and private options.

"If the Texas Legislature gives low-income parents the opportunity to choose religious schools for their children," Roland continued, the constitution would not be violated as long as parents are given choices "from among a range of public schools and other private schools—choices that wealthy parents already enjoy."

Connie Sadowski (connie@ceoaustin.org) directs the Education Options Resource Center at the Austin CEO Foundation.

INTERNET INFO

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"The Constitutionality of School Choice Under the U.S. and Texas Constitutions," testimony before the Texas Senate Education Committee by Dave Roland of the Institute for Justice, is available through *PolicyBot™*, The Heartland Institute's free online research databases. Point your Web browser to <http://www.policybot.org> and search for document #20151.

National K-12 Summit Highlights Milwaukee Success

By Matt Warner

School choice and charter school advocates from across the country gathered in Milwaukee, Wisconsin in early October for the State Policy Network's (SPN) first-of-its-kind K-12 Education Reform Summit.

The summit, held October 4-5, was co-sponsored by the Alliance for School Choice and the Milton and Rose D. Friedman Foundation.

"One of the summit goals was to re-energize school choice advocates working in the trenches for real reforms," said SPN President Tracie Sharp. SPN is a professional service organization for America's state-based, free-market think tank community.

For local school choice advocates in Wisconsin, the summit was an opportunity to share Milwaukee's success story. Earlier in the year, school choice proponents were victorious in their efforts to raise the enrollment cap for the Milwaukee Parental Choice Program to 22,500 students.

"The summit gave us the chance to talk with more than 400 activists about the positive impact of parent choice on families, public schools, and the community."

SUSAN MITCHELL
PRESIDENT
SCHOOL CHOICE WISCONSIN

"Too few people understand that giving families educational options is key to the success of our cities," said Susan Mitchell, president of School Choice Wisconsin, an advocacy group based in the city. "The summit gave us the chance to talk with more than 400 activists about the positive impact of parent choice on families, public schools, and the community."

Free to Create

Summit attendees were treated to tours of several schools participating in the

voucher program, located in some of Milwaukee's poorest and most crime-ridden neighborhoods. For some school administrators, locations like these are critical to their mission.

"We had the chance to move the school, but we decided we needed to stay. The kids we serve are from this neighborhood. What kind of message would it send to say, 'We want to educate you, but we want to take you out of your neighborhood?'" said Alvaro Garcia-Velez, president of Notre Dame Middle School (NDMS), a 10-year-old, all-girls school whose slogan is "Girls Rule!" NDMS accepts public-funded vouchers for eligible students.

Summit attendee Chris Derry, president of Kentucky's Bluegrass Institute for Public Policy Solutions, was encouraged by the visit to the schools.

"Seeing Milwaukee's inner-city schools firsthand was an eye-opener for me," Derry said. "Once you've seen an orderly learning environment in the midst of urban chaos, you can't say vouchers won't work outside Milwaukee."

Allowing Innovation

After learning in 1996 that juvenile crime in Milwaukee doubles between the hours of 3 p.m. and 7 p.m., Garcia-Velez and his wife, NDMS Principal Mary Garcia-Velez, instituted a mandatory after-school program that keeps students busy, active, and safe until 6 p.m. each day. Garcia-Velez attributes part of the school's success, evidenced by its waiting list for enrollment, to the freedom he has to be creative with such programs.

"I think a lot of people get into education thinking they will have flexibility to try new things, but unfortunately it is often the case that new ideas get squashed," Garcia-Velez said.

In addition to offering after-school programming and summer camps, NDMS makes an effort to monitor its students beyond middle school. If students have academic or attendance trouble in later grades, the school intervenes by offering continued inclusion in the after-school program and working with students' families to encourage school attendance.

Of NDMS's 152 graduates to date, 95 percent have graduated from high school, and 76 percent have gone on to college. According to the June 22, 2006 edition of *Education Week*, the Milwaukee Public Schools system graduates 43.1 percent of its students.

NDMS receives \$6,500 per student through the public-funded voucher program, well below the average state spending of \$10,367 on each public school student during the 2004-05 school year.

Coming Together

According to SPN, 185 organizations from 44 states were represented at the conference.

The large turnout reflects a growing movement of education reformers seeking to give parents more control over



Howard Fuller, founder and director of the Institute for the Transformation of Learning at Marquette University in Milwaukee, impresses upon the K-12 Education Reform Summit audience the importance of parental choice in education.



Participants in State Policy Network's K-12 Education Reform Summit applaud one of many outstanding speakers during the October event in Milwaukee.



(from left) Former U.S. Secretary of Education Rod Paige and Gisèle Huff of the Jaquelin Hume Foundation compare notes at the K-12 Education Reform Summit.

their children's education. According to The Heritage Foundation's "School Choice: 2006 Progress Report," 12 states and the District of Columbia now have a total of 21 school choice programs for K-12 education.

The report's author, Heritage Foundation policy analyst Dan Lips, attended the summit.

Lips said, "2006 was a successful year for school choice, and the Milwaukee education reform summit really showed how momentum is building across the nation. It provided an important opportunity for researchers and school choice advocates from around the country to

share ideas and compare strategies. That kind of collaboration and information sharing will pay dividends in 2007 and beyond."

The summit had three strategic core objectives: leadership training for the school reform movement, coalition building among like-minded reform groups, and networking opportunities for peer learning.

Matt Warner (mwarner@alec.org) is the American Legislative Exchange Council's Education Task Force director.

INTERNET INFO

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High School, College Graduates Lack Basic and Applied Skills, Employers Say

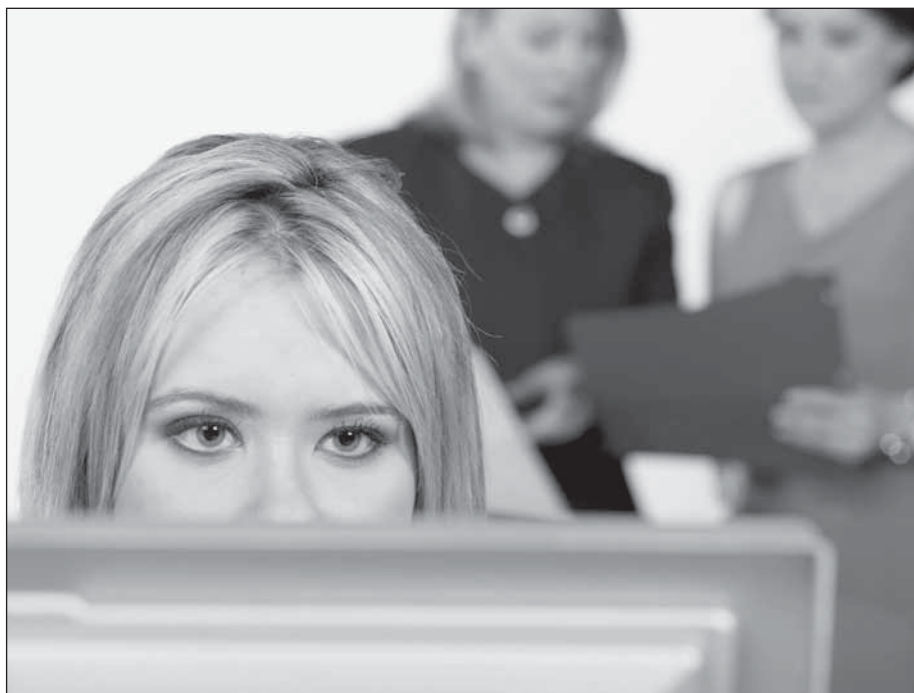
By Krista Kafer

High school and college graduates lack basic and applied skills, say business leaders, according to two surveys released in October.

On October 2, the Conference Board, a global business membership and research organization, released the results of its survey of 431 employers on recently hired high school and college graduates.

While basic knowledge and skills such as reading comprehension and mathematics were deemed important, employers said applied skills—such as work ethic, communication, collaboration, and critical thinking—are even more essential to workplace success.

According to the survey, new job entrants lack both.



“High school and college graduates lack basic and applied skills, say business leaders, according to two surveys released in October.”

Losing Jobs

Linda Barrington, the Conference Board's director of management research, said her group embarked on the study because they hear a continual “drumbeat about the shortage of skilled workers” from businesses nationwide. In a global hiring environment, she noted, employers can hire qualified workers from other countries when they cannot find them domestically.

“Employers make decisions based on

perception, and when workers are seen as deficient in skills, that will affect where [businesses] look for employees and their willingness to look out of the [United States],” Barrington said. Americans are an expensive workforce, she noted, so “we have to be that much better.”

When there is a mismatch between the skills needed and the skills at hand, Americans lose their competitiveness in a global market, Barrington said.

Lacking Skills

The Conference Board found a significant mismatch between the skills employers require and those graduates have. In the survey, 70 percent said high school graduates lack applied skills, and

40 percent said they lack basic skills in the reading, writing, and math needed for the job.

The majority of employers surveyed, 81 percent, believe new hires to be deficient in written communication. High school graduates lack grammar and spelling skills, as well as the ability to write memos, letters, and technical reports, the respondents said.

The lack of critical thinking ability is also a problem, according to 70 percent of respondents. Most respondents said high school graduates are adequately prepared in terms of information technology application and the ability to work in teams and with diverse people.

Planning Ahead

In general, most employers said two- and four-year college graduates have adequate job preparation, though few believe them to be “excellently” prepared.

A diploma doesn't guarantee good writing, for example, according to the survey. Nearly half of the respondents see their employees with associate's degrees as being deficient in writing.

Survey participants said creativity and innovation will be their two most pressing future needs, and 63 percent believe facility with foreign languages will be important.

“All stakeholders (business, educators, and community members) should consider methods of enhancing important workplace skills” by creating opportunities for students to participate in internships, work-study programs, summer jobs, job shadowing, mentoring, and on-the-job training, the study authors wrote.

They recommend stakeholders encourage creative thinking, development of leadership skills, and teamwork. The authors also suggest more discussion among stakeholders and new research, including the creation of case studies

of successful programs and evaluation methods.

Getting a Picture

An October 12 report by the Massachusetts Business Alliance for Education (MBAE), based on three focus groups of 23 employers statewide, reported similar findings.

According to the report, high school graduates lack basic and applied or “soft” skills such as communications (oral, written, and presentation), basic math and computer application, problem-solving, and even basic work behavior (work ethic and etiquette).

The MBAE wrote the report to give education reformers a clear picture of the deficiencies among new workforce entrants, said MBAE Managing Director Linda M. Noonan. Massachusetts is in the midst of a statewide discussion about what students need to know and be able to do when they graduate from high school in order to succeed in the workforce or higher education.

“We wanted to define from the employer perspective what work readiness skills are needed from graduates,” said Noonan.

The MBAE recommends schools:

- require all high school graduates to participate in internships, paid employment, or community service;
- increase students' public speaking opportunities and require an oral exam to prove speaking skills; and
- engage students in teamwork and activities that impose deadlines and penalties for tardiness.

Krista Kafer (kristakafer@msn.com) is a freelance writer in Denver, Colorado.

INTERNET INFO

The following documents addressing workforce readiness are available through *PolicyBot™*, The Heartland Institute's free online research database. Point your Web browser to <http://www.policybot.org> and select the topic/subtopic combination Education: Workforce Development, or search for the specific document numbers identified below.

“Are They Really Ready to Work? Employers' Perspectives on the Basic Knowledge and Applied Skills of New Entrants to the 21st Century Workforce,” Jill Casner-Lotto and Linda Barrington, the Conference Board, et al., October 10, 2006. Document #20154.

“Preparing for the Future: Employer Perspectives on Work Readiness Skills,” Massachusetts Business Alliance for Education (MBAE), October 12, 2006. Document #20155.

“The Literacy of America's College Students,” by Justin D. Baer, Andrea L. Cook, and Stéphane Baldi, American Institutes for Research, January 2006. Document #20156.



“Unfortunately, all evidence of your son's intelligence is purely anecdotal.”

Kentucky

Continued from page 1

better educational opportunities and services.

Under the legislation, parents would not have to hire a lawyer or go to court before sending their kids to another school. If it passes, the scholarship program will begin in fall 2007.

Lee pre-filed the legislation in September to kick-start discussion about the bill, which he will officially introduce in the legislature in January. He said early intervention is crucial in helping students overcome learning difficulties and that if his bill doesn't pass, many special-needs students will be stuck in schools where they aren't learning and progressing as they should be.

"Kentucky state Rep. Stan Lee (R-Lexington) proposed a school choice bill for special-needs students this fall. If it passes, it will be the first school choice program of any kind in the state."

Saving Money

The proposed school choice program could save taxpayers an estimated \$200 million over the next decade, according to a recent report, "Enable the Disabled: An Analysis of the Kentucky Students with Special Needs Scholarship Program." The report was written by Vicki E. Murray, Ph.D., an education policy analyst in Arizona, and Arwynn Mattix, a research assistant at the Goldwater Institute, a free-market think tank in Phoenix.

The report, released on November 6 by the Bluegrass Institute for Public Policy Solutions (BIPPS), a free-market think tank in Kentucky, examines the bill's potential financial impact on Kentucky's public school system.

Jim Waters, BIPPS' director of policy and communications, said he has heard from many parents of special-needs students who are frustrated with the current public school system's use of a one-size-fits-all method to educate their children.

Waters said Kentucky's learning-disabled children have been ignored and underserved. Kentucky has 109,000 K-12 children with learning disabilities, he said.

Opposing Reform

Opponents of the program include the *Lexington Herald-Leader* and *Louisville Courier-Journal* editorial boards. A September 15 *Courier-Journal* story reported that though the Kentucky Education Association (KEA) had not seen Lee's proposal, the group planned to oppose it.

"How can that possibly be accepted when it comes to kids with tremendous



Pitt Academy in Louisville, Kentucky is an independent Catholic school serving students with learning difficulties in a non-graded elementary through secondary setting.

disadvantages in life already?" Waters asked. He said the program isn't just some theoretical concept to be debated—it's something that will actually affect lives.

The KEA did not return calls seeking comment.

Arguing Premises

Under Lee's program, special-needs students would get scholarships equal to the amount of money the state guarantees for every pupil, plus the extra money added on for each special-needs student.

Scholarship amounts would vary depending on the severity of the recipient's disabilities, ranging from \$4,350 to \$11,752 per child. Similar scholarship programs are offered in other states, including Arizona, Florida, Ohio, and Utah.

A September 19 *Lexington Herald-Leader* editorial argued Lee's proposed program is "an empty promise" and claimed that if proponents "cared about special-needs kids, they'd be pushing to improve the services and offerings in public schools." The editorial also suggested the bill could result in a financial burden for public school districts because public transportation would have to be provided for students attending private schools.

Resolving Problems

Proponents of the legislation counter the scholarship program could reduce public school districts' spending by nearly \$50 million in administrative costs each year, by reducing the number of situations in which school staffers and lawyers face off with special-needs students' parents to resolve disputes about where students can go for the best education. Those disputes sometimes drag on for years.

"One of the things that we hear a lot from education officials here is how much it costs to educate special-needs children," Waters said. "Well, they

should be on board with this bill then, because they're not going to have the responsibility of providing education for many of them" if the bill passes.

Public schools still would receive federal and local funding under the program, Waters noted.

Paying More

About 2,500 special-needs children in Kentucky attend private schools, and about half of those students are there because the students' school districts sent them there to get a better education than what the students' public schools provided.

"One of the things that we hear a lot from education officials here is how much it costs to educate special-needs children. Well, they should be on board with this bill then, because they're not going to have the responsibility of providing education for many of them."

JIM WATERS

DIRECTOR OF POLICY AND COMMUNICATIONS
BLUEGRASS INSTITUTE FOR PUBLIC POLICY SOLUTIONS

According to articles Lee has written, some parents of special-needs students pay up to \$13,000—in addition to their tax dollars that go to the public school system they don't use—to send their kids to private schools to get better education opportunities and improved services.

Waters said, "We just think that all parents of special-needs children should

at least have that choice."

"With the proposed scholarship program, parents and educators would no longer have to spend so much of their time filling out paperwork or navigating their way through bureaucratic red tape," Murray said. "Instead, parents could concentrate on their children, and teachers could focus their talents back on the classroom."

Hiring Lawyers

Lee points out that not everyone has the money to send a special-needs student to a private school or to hire a lawyer to fight a student's public school district so the student may go to another school.

"Hiring a lawyer and taking time off from work to sue their children's school district is not a viable option for most Kentucky families," Murray agreed.

The *Herald-Leader* argued that one problem with Lee's proposed plan is that "Kentucky's constitution prohibits its spending public money on private schools."

Murray disagreed. "Denying special-needs students appropriate services or requiring dissatisfied parents to pay for services [that] their children should already be receiving from the public education system is also contrary to federal and state law," she said.

With 2,500 special-needs students already attending private schools, Waters wondered how Lee's proposed scholarship program could be considered unconstitutional.

"If it is, what's going to happen to those 2,500 students?" Waters asked. "Is the judge going to say they have to go back [to the public schools]?"

Mary Susan Littlepage (mslp@mylittlepages.com) is a freelance writer in Chicago.

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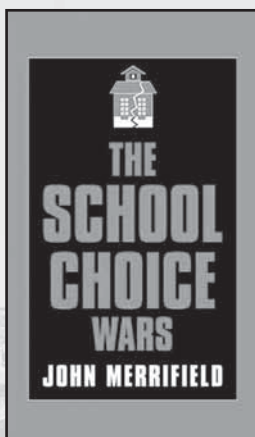
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THE SCHOOL CHOICE WARS

John Merrifield



"...my early favorite for Best School Reform Book of 2001. Even school reformers committed to an incrementalist approach will benefit from Merrifield's instructions on the proper use of rhetoric and the importance of communicating the goal of creating a true competitive education industry."

—Joseph L. Bast, author of *We Can Rescue Our Children* and *Rebuilding America's Schools*, founding publisher of *School Reform News* and president of the Heartland Institute

"...a sharp, punchy, action-oriented book. The author...appears to have read — and cited — every article and study on school choice ever written."

—The Washington Times

"The book, citing up-to-date research, would be a valuable resource to administrators regardless of where they stand on the issue of school choice." —THE SCHOOL ADMINISTRATOR

What does the term "school choice" mean to you? Opponents of parental choice have muddled its definition, misleading parents and educators and drawing public debate away from the core issues. In a book geared for anyone who wants to better understand this hotly contested topic, Merrifield clarifies the proposals in existence today, defining the key concepts related to choice. Arguing for a competitive education industry, he discusses policy and political strategy mistakes while suggesting corrections. This informative book covers government regulation issues, typical fallacies, diversity issues, private voucher initiatives, and experiments and empirical evidence about competition.

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Student Life-Planning Magazine Launches New and Improved Web Site

Offers education-minded teens a central location for college planning



The Next Step Magazine, a college, career, and life-planning magazine for high school students, announced on October 24 the launch of [nextstepmag.com](http://www.nextstepmag.com) (<http://www.nextstepmag.com>). The redesigned, more user-friendly site is positioned as a central location and comprehensive source for education-minded teens looking for the latest news, trends, and tips about college planning.

"When we decided to update the site, we polled students to find out exactly what they wanted," said Chris Roberts, vice president of marketing and interactive programs for Next Step Publishing, Inc. "As a result, the new site offers a seamless online experience that marries the information students need for college planning with fun topics and message boards that will entice and engage them."

"[T]he new site offers a seamless online experience that marries the information students need for college planning with fun topics and message boards that will entice and engage them."

CHRIS ROBERTS

VICE PRESIDENT OF MARKETING AND
INTERACTIVE PROGRAMS
NEXT STEP PUBLISHING, INC.

Teen Community

A key element of the updated site is the "Next Stepper" membership program. This teen community offers numerous categories for students to sound off about, from extracurricular activities to financial aid to test preparation. To connect teens further with the brand,

the Web site offers students that register opportunities to win scholarships and other prizes and to enter writing contests.

"By offering more user-generated content, we will enhance our relationship with current 'Next Steppers,' expand brand awareness to a broader teen audience, and importantly, provide more opportunities for students to offer advice and share stories with one another," added Roberts.

In addition to providing objective content for students, the site has a section for parents and guidance counselors. The goal is to offer adults networking opportunities and help build relationships among all parties involved in the college planning process.

"Our research shows that teens are going both online and offline for information and want multiple platforms to receive content," added Roberts. "The Web site and *The Next Step Magazine* will each have their own unique features, yet have synergy, driving traffic to one another."

About *The Next Step Magazine*

The Next Step Magazine is distributed in more than 20,500 high schools and read by more than 900,000 students in 50 states. Next Step Publishing also produces higher-education planning guides for parents, transfer students, adults, and school counselors, and a bilingual Latino edition. *The Next Step Magazine* is headquartered in Rochester, New York, where the first issue was published in May 1995.

PUBLIC INTEREST



Public Interest Institute regularly publishes four items a month: three INSTITUTE BRIEFS and either IOWA ECONOMIC SCORECARD, FACTS & OPINIONS, or LIMITS. Along with these regular publications, the Institute produces POLICY STUDIES as needed which are longer, analytical articles on important public issues such as privatization, Social Security reform, welfare, state budgeting, education, and tax issues. PII also distributes THE IOWA CIVICS PROJECT, a twelve-unit curriculum on state and local government, free to government teachers across the state.

If you are interested in obtaining further information on Public Interest Institute's education and research projects please visit our website at www.limitedgovernment.org. We also invite you to write or call us at 600 North Jackson Street, Mt. Pleasant, IA 52641-1328. Phone: 319-385-3462. E-Mail: public.interest.institute@limitedgovernment.org.

INSTITUTE

Federal High School Scholarship Plan Proposed

Bipartisan coalition supports Senate plan

By Dan Lips

In September, U.S. Sens. Jim DeMint (R-SC) and Barack Obama (D-IL) introduced S. 3995, the Education Opportunity Act, to provide college-level opportunities for disadvantaged high school students. The measure offers a new, reformed method of providing low-income students with the opportunity to take Advanced Placement (AP) classes and other advanced courses.

The DeMint-Obama proposal would give qualifying low-income high school students the opportunity to take classes at a university, community, or technical college. For example, participating students could take AP classes and receive credit that can be used in college.

'A Step Forward'

School choice advocates hailed the move as a step forward.

"Senator DeMint has proven to be a friend to parental choice in education

throughout his tenure in Congress," said Don Soifer, executive vice president of the Lexington Institute, a free-market think tank in Arlington, Virginia. "He recognizes that if Washington is going to continue to increase its role in public education in this country, finding ways to give more and better choices to poor families in underperforming schools is an important priority."

The program would essentially extend the opportunities available through the higher education Pell Grant program to high school students to take college-level courses. The Pell Grant program currently provides nearly \$12 billion annually to approximately five million higher education students to assist with tuition costs. The DeMint-Obama proposal would make federal funds available to qualifying low-income high school students.

Additional Opportunities

"Our bill would significantly expand college-level opportunities for low-income high school students, and teach these students that success in school means success in life," DeMint explained. "This legislation will help keep our high school students in school by raising their expectations and showing them they can do college-level work."

Federal policymakers are looking for ways to give disadvantaged students greater access to AP courses and higher-level instruction. Earlier this year, the Bush

administration proposed funding for programs that provide greater access to math and science instruction and AP courses for disadvantaged children, in its American Competitiveness Initiative.

DeMint suggested the Education Opportunity Act would be a cost-effective way of accomplishing the same goal of providing higher education instruction to low-income students.

"In September, U.S. Sens. Jim DeMint (R-SC) and Barack Obama (D-IL) introduced S. 3995, the Education Opportunity Act, to provide college-level opportunities for disadvantaged high school students."

"While we have expanded low-income students' access to AP classes, I believe we are missing another vital avenue to increase college-level opportunities for those students," DeMint said. "Our bill would allow students to take advantage of college-level classes at no extra cost or burden to their high school, while at the same time exposing the student to the hundreds of classes at their local community college."

Future Possibilities

Soifer pointed to the importance of the bipartisan support for the measure.

"It is encouraging to see Senator Obama acknowledge that students from poor families often do not see their educational needs met by their neighbor-

hood government high school," Soifer explained. "Those students deserve more choices and more portability for their public education dollars. S. 3995 would give many of those families an interesting new educational option."

"But a broader choice plan would certainly make more of a difference," Soifer added.

DeMint said the Education Opportunity Act would be an important step toward greater parental choice in education.

"The more we show low-income students and parents that education choices benefit them directly, the better our chances are of expanding education choices in the future," DeMint said.

Time Constraints

Facing a short calendar for the remainder of the year and the 109th Congress, legislative action on the bill probably will not occur until 2007, even though the bipartisan measure was introduced in September.

"We are unlikely to find time to bring up this legislation as a stand-alone bill this year," DeMint explained. "However, it's important we begin the debate over innovative education solutions, and this legislation is one more valuable option to empower students and parents with choices to meet individual student needs."

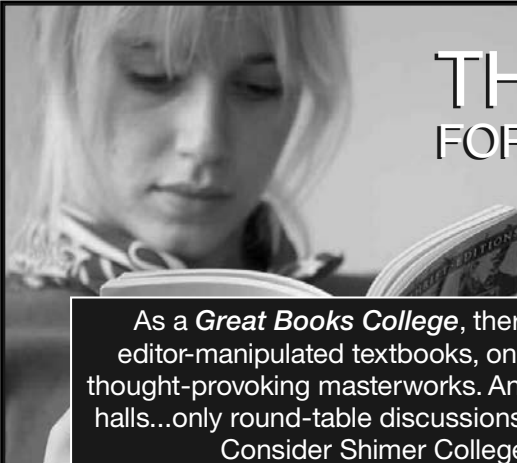
"I look forward to working with the [Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions] committee next year to make this legislation a reality," DeMint said.

Dan Lips (dan.lips@heritage.org) is an education policy analyst with The Heritage Foundation in Washington, DC.



U.S. Sens. Barack Obama (left) and Jim DeMint (below) have cosponsored a bill that will give low-income high school students the opportunity to take classes at a university, community college, or technical college.






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In Tutoring, As in Teaching, Structured Programs Work Best

The Tutoring Revolution: Applying Research for Best Practices, Policy Implications, and Student Achievement

Edward E. Gordon, Ronald R. Morgan, Charles J. O'Malley, and Judith Ponticell
Rowman & Littlefield Education, November 2006
Cloth, 262 pages, \$29.95, ISBN 1-57886-532-8

Review by George Clowes

A structured curriculum is one of the key features of proven high-quality tutoring procedures. So concludes a new book, co-authored by tutoring expert Edward E. Gordon, that reviews both tutoring research and theories of learning.

This finding for tutoring parallels what University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee researchers reported for classroom instruction five years ago: that higher-achieving teachers use explicit instruction rather than student-centered experiential learning.

Tutoring has become a high-growth industry over the past five years, since

the 2001 passage of the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB). That law identified "supplemental educational services" (SES), such as private tutoring, as one of the options that persistently failing public schools could use federal funds to offer parents.

Although a maximum of \$2 billion of Title I funds could be directed to SES, current spending is about \$400 million and growing at about 20 percent a year, according to Tim Wiley, senior analyst at Boston-based Eduventures, a leading information-services provider for the education marketplace.

The private tutoring industry, exclud-

ing SES, has a long-term growth rate of 4 to 8 percent, according to Wiley, and served 1.9 million K-12 students in 2004-05 on revenues of \$2.2 billion.

Finding Tutors

To help families find reliable tutors, in 2002 Gordon drew on his 35 years of experience in tutoring to produce a timely, useful book, *Tutor Quest: Finding Effective Education for Children and Adults*.

Now, concerned about ineffective tutoring programs that fail to raise student achievement, he has co-authored *The Tutoring Revolution*, which describes what research says about tutoring best practices.

"[T]he new book's target audience is school district administrators, teachers, tutors, education policymakers, and researchers."

Gordon's co-authors are Ronald R. Morgan, an educational psychology professor at Loyola University, Chicago; Charles O'Malley, an independent education consultant; and Judith Ponticell, professor of educational leadership at the University of South Florida, Lakeland.

"Tutoring needs to be based on solid research, not commercial advertising hype," Gordon explained in an interview for this story. "There's no recognition that there is a body of research that actually shows that tutoring works. This is the first research book ever published on tutoring, and it begins to show what works."

Aiming at Professionals

Unlike *Tutor Quest*, which was aimed at parents, the new book's target audience is school district administrators, teachers, tutors, education policymakers, and researchers.

The first two chapters provide a historical perspective on tutoring, with particular emphasis on the policy changes wrought by NCLB. The next two chapters describe different theories in educational psychology and their application to learning, teaching, and tutoring.

However, many of the ideas covered—such as pedagogy of place, constructivism, and postmodernism—add little to an understanding of the proven tutoring practices discussed later in the book.

Making it Work

The authors then review tutoring research and proven methods. The last two chapters of the book provide details

of trade-practice standards for tutoring, model state regulations, and suggested areas for further research.

The authors note that while many citations of tutoring exist in the education literature, few involve empirical research findings. Most are simply case studies, testimonials, or narratives.

The most important research finding identified in the book is that "well structured [tutoring] programs work best," a conclusion reported by many reviewers, including Barak Rosenshine and Norma Furst.

This finding suggests the six-function teaching model developed by Rosenshine and Robert Stevens for classroom instruction is equally applicable to tutoring. (See sidebar.)

Assessing Effectiveness

In the book's most important chapter, the authors ask, "Has Tutoring Worked?" In an all-too-brief response, they describe 12 proven tutoring procedures and list 10 key components of high-quality tutoring programs. These tutoring "best practices" include:

- Design and implement highly structured programs, usually with specifically crafted curriculum scripts.
- Don't focus on narrow, isolated instructional activities. The use of a tutoring curriculum script with a checklist helps diagnose specific skill deficiencies and identify poor learners.
- There should be a strong connection between what the student knows and the skills that need to be learned. Again, this often involves the use of a tutoring curriculum script covering a well-defined set of skills.
- Tutoring at the student's home often maximizes long-term student achievement. Home-based tutoring allows remediation of student skills and helps parents improve the learning environment in the home.
- Spend an adequate amount of time on task. Time is needed to assess which skills are missing, to change study habits, and to improve motivation.

"Home-based tutoring allows remediation of student skills and helps parents improve the learning environment in the home."

"If we now know what works, we should begin training teachers at the undergraduate level in how to tutor using these proven procedures," Gordon said in an interview. "And the way to get at more of the things that work is to do more practitioner-based research."

George Clowes (clowesga@aol.com) is the former managing editor of *School Reform News* and a senior fellow for *The Heartland Institute*.

Teaching New Skills

After reviewing additional research studies on teacher performance and the mechanisms of student learning, Barak Rosenshine and Robert Stevens in 1986 developed a six-function teaching model to describe the necessary sequence of instructional steps that are involved in having a student learn new skills.

The principles apply equally well to classroom instruction and tutoring, and they are part of a growing movement toward direct instruction techniques, which studies consistently show to be superior to "experiential" instruction. Rosenshine and Stevens recommend the following approach:

1. Daily Review: Review prerequisite skills.
2. Presentation: Start with a brief statement of goals; introduce new material rapidly, but in small steps; demonstrate, illustrate, and provide concrete examples.
3. Guided Practice: Guide student practice initially; obtain response and check for understanding; achieve a high level of active practice.
4. Correctives and Feedback: Elicit specific responses; monitor and give specific advice.
5. Independent Practice (Seatwork): Practice until responses are firm, quick, and automatic.

6. Weekly and Monthly Reviews: Systematic review of previously learned material.

— George Clowes



INTERNET INFO

"What Characterizes an Effective Teacher? An exclusive interview with Barak Rosenshine," by George Clowes, *School Reform News*, May 2002, <http://www.heartland.org/Article.cfm?artId=9231>

"Study: Student-Centered Learning Ineffective," by George Clowes, *School Reform News*, July 2001, <http://www.heartland.org/Article.cfm?artId=9903>

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SCHOOL CHOICE ... IN YOUR FAVORITE NEW MEDIA FORM!

School Choice on Audio

Audio recordings from the 2006 Educational Choice Speaker Series are now available online.

The luncheon series is hosted by the Illinois School Choice Initiative (ISCI), a project of The Heartland Institute. The mission of the initiative is to enable all parents in Illinois to choose quality schools for their children. For more information, please contact Ralph Conner, government relations manager for The Heartland Institute, at 312/377-4000, email conner@heartland.org.

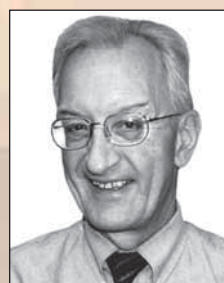
Since January, the ISCI has hosted a monthly luncheon at the Metropolitan Club of Chicago, where business and civic leaders and school

choice supporters have heard from some of the movement's most important leaders, including Robert Enlow of the Milton & Rose D. Friedman Foundation, Rebeca Nieves-Huffman of the Hispanic Council for Reform and Educational Options, and Lawrence Patrick III of the Black Alliance for Educational Options.

The audio recordings can be listened to online or downloaded to an iPod or MP3 player by subscribing to the Educational Choice Speaker Series Podcast. Visit The Heartland Institute's online audio center at <http://www.fromtheheartland.org/live/audio.html> and scroll down to the ISCI Educational Choice Speaker series.



THE FOLLOWING PRESENTATIONS ARE AVAILABLE:



JANUARY: George Clowes, The Heartland Institute

On January 19, Clowes kicked off the new monthly Educational Choice Speaker Series with a talk titled, "Competition as an Effective Education Reform: What Works and What's Ahead."



FEBRUARY: Ken Johnson, Milwaukee Public Schools

On February 16, Kenneth L. Johnson, Milwaukee School Board president, addressed "Milwaukee Public School Reform: Rethinking of Parents as Our Customers."



MARCH: Virginia Gentles, Florida Department of Education

On March 16, Virginia Gentles, executive director of the Florida Department of Education's Office of Independent Education and Parental Choice, described the

school choice programs available to parents in the Sunshine State.



APRIL: Lawrence Patrick, BAEO

On April 20, Lawrence Patrick III of the Black Alliance for Educational Options (BAEO) addressed the need for educational choice for black parents and students.



MAY: Rebeca Nieves-Huffman, Hispanic CREO

On May 18, Rebeca Nieves-Huffman addressed the education crisis and how it affects Hispanic children. Huffman is president and CEO of the Hispanic Council for Reform and Educational Options (Hispanic CREO).



JUNE: Robert Enlow, Milton & Rose D. Friedman Foundation

On June 15, Robert Enlow, executive director of the Milton & Rose D. Friedman Foundation, gave an overview of the school

choice movement, assessing the strength of the movement.



JULY: Lisa Snell, Reason Foundation

On July 27, Lisa Snell, director of education and child welfare at the California-based Reason Foundation, spoke about the pitfalls of universal preschool and the benefits of weighted student funding as a viable and effective K-12 reform.



SEPTEMBER: David Brennan, White Hat Management

On September 21, David Brennan's speech, "The U.S. Education System Is Perfectly Aligned with Cuba and North Korea: Do We Really Treasure Individual Rights? Don't We Value the Power of Consumer Choice?" stressed the importance of innovation in our education system.



OCTOBER: Clint Bolick, Alliance for School Choice

On October 19, Clint Bolick closed the ISCI's

2006 Educational Choice Speaker Series with a discussion of school choice cases currently in the courts, and what the future holds.

SCHOOL CHOICE ON DVD

DVD recordings from the 2006 Educational Choice Speaker Series are also available for purchase.

SCHOOL CHOICE ON CABLE TV

"School Choice," a cable program featuring presentations from the ISCI's luncheon series, is broadcast on Comcast's public access channel in the following suburban Chicago, Illinois communities:

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